

In the *Claims Rejection – 35 USC § 102* section, claims 1-4, 8 and 9 were initially rejected as being anticipated by the Sakakibara patent; and later rejected as being anticipated by the Kodaverdian patent. However, for the following reasons, it is submitted that independent claim 1 and claims 2-9 dependent therefrom are all allowable over these references.

As recited in independent method claim 1, the present invention requires that the second actuator (e.g., for the foot rest) is activated at a time which is separated from the time at which the first actuator (e.g., for the leg rest) is activated by “a predetermined length of time”. This means that the length of time, or a time delay, between the activations of the first and second actuators is (always) the same (constant) length of time. In other words, the predetermined length of time does not depend on the working of the seat, and in particular, the time delay does not depend on the positions of the movable seat parts. Thus, the second actuator is not activated based on the position of the first actuator, since the second actuator is activated when the predetermined length of time has elapsed after activation of the first actuator.

The Sakakibara patent discloses a device for controlling power seats which includes, as noted by the examiner, an algorithm shown in figure 13B and disclosed at the top of column 14. The descriptions of steps 107, 108, 109 and 110 show that a motor is energized or is stopped when a limit switch is turned on (see LS(61), LS (72), LS(41), LS(51), LS(11), and LS(32)). Thus, in the Sakakibara patent, activation of an actuator and its associated seat element is dependent on the position of another actuator and its associated seat element – so that the length of time between the

activations if two actuators is not “predetermined” but rather varies depending on the initial position of the associated seat element to be moved by the first moved actuator.

The Kodaverdian patent discloses a system for controlling a vehicle seat which is similar to that of the Sakakibara patent in that a second actuator of a seat element is activated dependent on the position of a first actuator and its associated first seat element. As explained at column 5, lines 32-45, the foot-rest is retracted when the leg-rest reaches an angle θ determined by an on-off switch 80 (see figure 6). Thus, the synchronism between the two actuators is achieved according to the position of the actuator and its associated seat element.

While the examiner has stated that both the Sakakibara patent and the Kodaverdian patent disclose actuating of a second actuator at an instant subsequent to the actuating of the first actuator “separated by a predetermined time”, this is obviously not accurate as noted above. There may be a separation in time between actuations, but this separation is not “predetermined” in any sense ordinary used by those of ordinary skill in the art. However, if the examiner would prefer that this “predetermined” claim language be further defined to even more clearly avoid such “varying” times of the prior art references, the examiner is invited to consider using the terms “constant” or “fixed” before “predetermined” (or some other such term or terms) and to contact the undersigned to discuss making such changes by examiner’s amendment if this will result in allowance of the claims.

As noted above, the present invention in claim 1 recites that a second actuator is started only when a predetermined time (as measured by a timer) has expired after a first actuator is activated. As neither the Sakakibara patent or the Kodaverdian patent

discloses such a feature, it is submitted that independent method claim 1 is allowable over these references. For these same reasons, it is submitted that dependent method claims 2-7 dependent from claim 1 are similarly allowable.

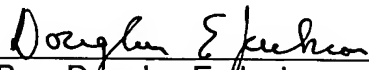
Independent apparatus claim 8 claims the use of a means for actuating a second actuator after "a predetermined length of time" in a manner similar to claim 1. It is thus submitted that independent apparatus claim 8 and claim 9 dependent therefrom are allowable over the Sakakibara patent and the Kodaverdian patent for the same reasons as discussed above for claim 1.

The remaining references which were cited but not applied have been reviewed but are not believed to be pertinent to the patentability of the present invention.

For all of the foregoing reasons, it is submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and such action is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 20 May 2003


By: Douglas E. Jackson
Registration No.: 28,518

LARSON & TAYLOR, PLC • 1199 North Fairfax St. • Suite 900 • Alexandria, VA 22314

ATTACHMENT Amendments to the Claims

Following herewith is a complete listing of the claims, including a marked copy of the currently amended claims.

1. (currently amended) A method for controlling the dynamics of a seat comprising at least three seat parts which can move with respect to one another, and at least two actuators for moving the three parts with respect to one another, the method comprising a step of operating the two actuators jointly to modify the configuration of the seat, ~~characterized in that said operating step of joint operation comprises~~ the following successive steps:

- activating a first actuator at a first instant; and
- activating a second actuator at a second instant subsequent to the first instant and separated from the first instant by a predetermined length of time.

B1
2. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that it comprises~~further comprising a step of detecting that the first actuator has stopped during the predetermined length of time, and a step of activating the second actuator as soon as it is ~~said step of detecting detects~~ that the first actuator has stopped.

3. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein said operating step of joint operation of the two actuators is a step of bringing the seat into a predetermined configuration in which two of the moving parts are in predetermined positions specific to the predetermined configuration.

4. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 2 ~~3 taken together,~~
~~characterized in that~~
further comprising a step of detecting that the first actuator has stopped during the
predetermined length of time and a step of activating the second actuator as soon as
said step of detecting detects that the first actuator has stopped, and

wherein the step of detecting that the first actuator has stopped comprises a step of detecting that the seat part operated by the first actuator has reached ~~its~~ the predetermined position thereof.

5. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 3, in which the seat comprises a seat cushion, a leg rest articulated to the seat cushion between a folded-back position and a deployed position, a foot rest that can move with respect to the leg rest between a retracted position and a deployed position, and two actuators arranged, one of them between the seat cushion and the leg rest, and the other one, between the leg rest and the foot rest, in which method the phase of joint operation of the two activators is designed to move the leg rest into ~~its~~ the deployed position thereof and the foot rest into ~~its~~ the deployed position thereof, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the first actuator triggered at the first instant is the actuator arranged between the seat cushion and the leg rest, and the second actuator triggered at the second instant subsequent to the first instant is the actuator arranged between the leg rest and the foot rest.

6. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 3, in which the seat comprises a seat cushion, a leg rest articulated to the seat cushion between a folded-back position and a deployed position, a foot rest that can move with respect to the leg rest between a retracted position and a deployed position, and two actuators arranged, one of them between the seat cushion and the leg rest, and the other one, between the leg rest and the foot rest, in which method the phase of joint operation of the two activators is designed to move the leg rest into ~~its~~ the folded-back position thereof and the foot rest into ~~its~~ the retracted position thereof, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the first actuator triggered at the first instant is the actuator arranged between the leg rest and the foot rest, and the second actuator triggered at the second instant subsequent to the first instant is the actuator arranged between the seat cushion and the leg rest.

7. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 5, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the predetermined length of time separating the first and second instants is set to make

sure that the foot rest does not strike the floor over which the seat is installed when the seat configuration is being modified.

8. (currently amended) A seat comprising at least three seat parts which can move with respect to one another, and at least two actuators for moving the three parts with respect to one another, and operating means for operating the two actuators jointly to modify the configuration of the seat, ~~characterized in that said joint-operating means~~ comprise:

- Bk
- means for actuating a first actuator at a first instant; and
 - means of actuating a second actuator at a second instant subsequent to the said first instant and separated from the first instant by a predetermined length of time.

9. (currently amended) The seat as claimed in claim 8, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said ~~joint-operating~~ means comprise means of detecting that the first actuator has stopped during the predetermined length of time, and means of actuating the second actuator as soon as ~~it is~~ said means of detecting detects ~~that~~ the first actuator has stopped.
